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ABSTRACT

Although the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) are rooted in the tradition of providing transfer education to Chicago's working class youth, the current administrative acceptance of a market-oriented, vocational philosophy has resulted in a decline in general education courses and has jeopardized equal access to higher education. This vocational orientation, developed in the late 1960's and 1970's, has been deliberately encouraged by an informal web of national and state institutions for the benefit of employers. State differential funding of community colleges has increasingly favored occupational, rather than baccalaureate, education, and policymakers have restricted open admissions policies to two-year colleges. As a result, administrators came into conflict with general education faculty, and the "new students" of the 1960's and 1970's were shunted into two-year, terminal, vocational programs and denied upward mobility via additional higher education. This trend is mirrored in the 1974 CCC Master Plan, which proposed that general education be provided only in order to service career programs. In planning for the 1980's, however, administrators must look beyond the immediate goal of meeting manpower needs and develop general education curricula to provide students with the imagination and judgement to deal with global problems. The resolutions to strengthen general education precede the paper. (JP)

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WHY ALL CCC STUDENTS NEED GENERAL EDUCATION

A Position Paper in Support of Resolutions
Proposed by
The City Colleges Study Group

Prepared for
The FCCCC 1979 All-City Conference,
"Education: Planning for the Quality 80s"
Friday, November 30 and
Saturday, December 1.

RESOLUTIONS

CCSG respectfully requests that the Curriculum Committee and/or the full Conference discuss and vote upon each of the following resolutions separately, upon its own merits, as outlined in the accompanying paper.

Resolution I: The City Colleges of Chicago should maintain, in each of the Colleges, strong baccalaureate-oriented transfer programs, based upon a sound general education core of 36 credit hours of required courses plus electives. To implement this resolution, the Conference shall appoint a committee to define an acceptable level of strength for the transfer programs, which shall be reported to the Spring 1980 Conference, along with recommendations on further specific steps to implement the resolution.

Resolution II: The City Colleges of Chicago should maintain, in each of the Colleges, a strong general studies program (number 203 in the CCC Catalog 1979-81) for students who are not yet ready to enroll in a baccalaureate-oriented transfer program, based upon a sound general education core of required courses and electives. To implement this resolution, the Conference shall appoint a committee

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to define an acceptable level of strength for the program and of soundness for the general education core. The committee shall report its findings to the Spring 1980 Conference, along with recommendations on further specific steps to implement the resolution.

Resolution III: The City Colleges of Chicago should maintain a strong general education component in all "career" (occupational, vocational, technical) degree or certificate programs. To implement this resolution, the Conference shall appoint a committee to define an acceptable level of strength for the general education component, which shall be reported at the Spring 1980 Conference, along with recommendations on further specific steps to implement the resolution.

Resolution IV: There should be an ongoing City Colleges of Chicago Master Plan Committee, with faculty meeting periodically with administrators to prepare a master plan for the system every five years. The committee would also meet during each five years to discuss implementing and updating the current plan. To implement this resolution, the Conference shall appoint a master plan steering committee to plan the organization of a city-wide master plan committee, with whatever subcommittees and/or local college liaison committees it shall deem appropriate. The steering committee shall present its recommendations at the Spring 1980 Conference.

Resolution V: There should be an ongoing City Colleges Curriculum Improvement Committee to study the proper relationship between general and career education, transfer and terminal degrees and certificates, and the improvement of general education and career education.

Resolution VI: There should be an ongoing City Colleges of Chicago Instructional Improvement Committee to study such methods as mastery learning and inquiry learning, use of instructional technologies, and faculty-student instructional relations.

Resolution VII: There should be an ongoing City Colleges of Chicago Community Relations Committee to assess needs of communities and students, to work on recruitment and publicity, and to enlist appropriate political support of State Boards and legislatures.

Resolution VIII: There should be an ongoing City Colleges of Chicago Publications Committee to identify problems, discuss ideas, and report on experiments, by means of suitable publications.

Resolution IX: Every City College of Chicago faculty member and administrator should serve on one of the following committees: Master Plan, Curriculum Improvement, Instructional Improvement, Community Relations, or Publications.

An Outline of:

"Why All Today's Students Need General Education"

by D. H. Sanborn

I. Social and Educational Problems in Recent CCC Program Shifts

   A. A Tradition of Equal Opportunity

   B. Decline of the Transfer Function

   C. Associated Decline in General Education

II. Causes of the Decline: The Wrong Direction in Changing Circumstances

   A. The New Vocationalism

      1. National Strategy: The Master Plan

      2. Local Tactics: CCC "Careerism"

   B. Shifting Enrollment Patterns

III. The Right Direction

IV. Redirecting Effort

WHY ALL CCC STUDENTS NEED GENERAL EDUCATION

Donald H. Sanborn
The Loop College

(The City Colleges Study Group endorsed the general sense of this paper at its November 27, 1979 meeting.)

Synopsis

Before we can decide where we should be going, we need to look at where we have been and where we are going. If the direction is wrong, we should change it.

A conference or two can at best suggest directions. Truly productive change will require continuing formal discussions between faculty and administrators.

I. Social and Educational Problems in Recent CCC Program Shifts

There is widespread faculty concern over a decline in the CCC transfer function, associated with a serious decline in the number and variety of general education courses scheduled. The Central Administration's acceptance of a market-oriented vocational philosophy, euphemistically called "career education," has contributed to the slide. The decline is educationally unsound and, in the long run, socially unjust. It should be halted, not encouraged.

A. A Tradition of Equal Opportunity

From 1911 through World War II, the City Colleges of Chicago served primarily to prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Since 1934, a sound general education curriculum of required and elective courses in the liberal arts and

sciences has been at the core of the CCC's college-parallel studies, leading to the Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree.

Over the years, the City Colleges have provided the only chance for a great many of Chicago's working-class young people to begin their higher education. Statistics show that CCC students do just as well as "native" students at transfer institutions. Many of Chicago's business and professional people got their start in the City Colleges. Our own Chancellor began his career at Crane College (now Malcolm X) and later got a master's degree from the University of Chicago, going on to teaching and administration at Wright College.

Today, two-thirds of the CCC's students are of minority origin. Most are working-class or disadvantaged. Like their predecessors, they want the City Colleges to help them become educated persons ready for informed citizenship and meaningful work. They need the educational opportunity for an equal chance at success in American life, which the CCC has traditionally offered.

B. Decline of the Transfer Function

However, the kind of educational opportunity available in the City Colleges is changing. Since World War II, vocational offerings have come to predominate. More than half our students are now enrolled in the nearly 200 occupational programs9 which lead to the Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree or to a shorter-term Certificate. Increasingly, one- or two-semester entry-level employment certificate programs appear in the CCC catalog. The shift is crucial.

The baccalaureate-oriented A.A. degree requires at least 36 credit hours of college-parallel general education courses. But the occupationally-oriented A.A.S. degree requires only 15-18 credit hours of such work. Because it does not include the general education required of transfer students by senior colleges and universities, the A.A.S. is a terminal degree. It discourages further upward mobility by means of additional higher education. It feeds the student directly into the job market.

Enrolling an increasing number of City College students in terminal A.A.S. and shorter-term Certificate "career" programs should not be done at the expense of the CCC's traditionally strong transfer function. To deny the "new students" served by the CCC the same equal opportunity for higher education and its rewards (satisfying work, professional status, good pay) which was afforded to previous generations is socially unjust. And no rhetoric about the declining value of a B.A. or unemployed B.A.s can conceal the injustice. Students who want the chance at a B.A. should have it, ours no less than those who can afford four-year colleges and universities. Policies to encourage vocational enrollment should not discourage baccalaureate enrollment.

C. Associated Decline in General Education

Clearly, the smaller the number of general education courses required in occupational programs, the fewer CCC students who will get a full, well-balanced general education in the five liberal arts and sciences disciplinary areas traditional in the A.A. programs.

Indeed, some of the new, one-semester certificate programs require no general education, on the dubious principle that entry-level employability is paramount and general education can safely be deferred until later (if the student returns).

As vocational offerings have grown, the Central Administration has restricted scheduling of the advanced and elective courses attractive to prospective baccalaureate students. Many of these courses are no longer offered at some of the Colleges. More stringent Central Administration requirements for minimum enrollment at registration have made it even more difficult for scheduled electives and advanced courses to survive. The policy of refusing to schedule such courses again, after they have once failed to enroll the arbitrary minimum, virtually guarantees a downward spiral in the variety of general education offerings. Limiting the number of sections of required general courses to be scheduled (based upon the previous semester's enrollment) has a similarly restrictive effect on the time spread of courses available to students at registration.

The net tendency of these various Central policies, as carried out by local administrations, is to greatly diminish the variety and number of City College general education offerings for all students. As the decline becomes known, more and more prospective transfer students will decide to go elsewhere. The "trend" to decreasing enrollment in CCC transfer programs thus seems to be, at least in part, the result of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students desert the transfer program because deliberate policy discourages them. What is the source of this policy?

II. Causes of the Decline: The Wrong Direction in Changing Circumstances

There are two underlying causes of the decline in CCC transfer programs and associated general education offerings. First, fiscal and ideological pressures led the Central Administration to accept the Career Education philosophy pushed by the U.S. Office of Education under Commissioner Marland during the Nixon Administration. Second, enrollment patterns have changed. The kinds and numbers of students enrolling have shifted. And recent economic pressures have influenced student motivation. Both main causes deserve attention.

A. The New Vocationalism: Career Education

1. National Strategy: The Master Plan

The Career Education movement of the late 1960s and 1970s is merely the current expression of a long-term tendency in the United States. An informally interlocking web of national, regional, and state institutions exerts pressure in local areas, to vocationalize American public education for the benefit of employers. The aim is a supply of manpower trained at public expense to meet the varying needs of employers for highly specialized workers in mid-level technical and service fields.

The American higher education establishment accepted a "careerist" philosophy for two-year colleges as a way of coping with swelling enrollments expected in the 1960s, as the World War II "baby boom" generations came of age. Noting minority pressures for equal opportunity, policymakers decided to try to limit open admissions to junior colleges, to shunt large numbers of the "new students" of the 60s

and 70s into two-year terminal vocational programs. Needs of business, industry, and government for moderately skilled manpower (based upon employment "trends" derived from statistics they fed to the U.S. Department of Labor) would determine the programs to be offered.

The net effect of this policy was to maintain a stratified educational system, in the name of undiluted quality at the top of the educational hierarchy. The upper/middle/lower socioeconomic classes would attend, respectively, the private elite/public four-year/public two-year colleges.

The masses of new students got the appearance of equal access to opportunity through higher education, but not the reality. Reorganized counselling, to match students with the "career" programs offered, was a necessity. The literature is full of moans about students with "unrealistic aspirations," who must be quietly steered by "more realistic assessment" of their abilities into terminal "career" programs consistent with their lack of traditional preparation. Effective remediation, to remedy the effects of years of educational deprivation in substandard schools of minority communities, was deemed too costly. The four-year schools could only handle so many students in traditional professions. Besides, if the swelling tide of minority students got a fair slice of the pie, the traditional college clientele would lose its privileged access to society's limited supply of top positions. So remediation was out, except on a token basis. "Career counselling" and job placement were in, to keep the customers happy with the vocational programs in which they found themselves.

If this informal national policy sounds familiar, that is because the mechanism by which it spread worked so effectively. State after state in the 1960s passed legislation creating boards of higher education, which then passed remarkably similar master plans to coordinate the expected growth in enrollments. The junior college's rapidly expanding vocational function was justified by redefining it as an institution meeting community needs, a "community college." The community whose needs was to be met was primarily that of employers, in business, industry, and government. To meet employer needs for specialized technical and service workers, community colleges would have to broaden their curricula and become more "comprehensive."

"Comprehensiveness" was the State's vehicle for vocationalizing the junior college. Differential funding (favoring occupational over adult, remedial, and baccalaureate education) ensured that, in practice, "comprehensiveness" meant adding vocational programs designed to meet regional or local manpower needs. This financial "carrot," dangled before money-conscious college administrators, was supplemented by the "stick" of threatening to withhold accreditation from community colleges which did not redefine their identities in accordance with their new community responsibilities.

Hence the quest for identity so noticeable in community college literature of the period (including the 1974 CCC Master Plan): traditional academic values of the liberal arts faculty were out of step with the national master plan; far-sighted, flexible administrators would have to persuade, entice, goad, or coerce teachers to do

what they were told. "Old-line" faculty councils or unions were identified as chief blockages to progress.

Bitter adversarial struggles followed between faculty organized as labor and administrators organized as management. At stake was the seat of authority in educational decision-making. And jobs. Administrators anxious to hew to the new vocational line wanted to replace liberal arts faculty with pragmatic practitioners from "the world of work." For academic faculty, defending values of the liberal arts and sciences, embodied in existing general education programs, suddenly became a matter of economic self-preservation. The super-heated wartime economy had begun to cool off after Vietnam--and the crest of the "war baby" wave was passing. Constantly defending themselves against administrative attacks on traditional programs or devious managerial attempts at retrenchment, liberal arts faculty throughout the nation found far too little time left to worry about improving the quality of education. Nor did spending time regularly on picket lines provide incentives to become more productive. Instead it drained emotional energy and left residues of bitterness against those who ran the institutions. Ironically, administrators desiring greater faculty "productivity" in a time of increasing fiscal restraint found their managerial, vocational strategies increasingly counter-productive. Academe became the scene of protracted trench warfare. Everybody was dug in, defending their own positions.

The politics of economic struggle began to replace any concern for educational principles in faculty/administration/student relationships. In vying to persuade students to accept "career" education

or general education as it was, faculty and administrators had little time to improve either. They found no time to sit down with each other regularly to discuss ways of integrating the theoretical and the practical, the general and the special, life career and work career, in a single education. No, there was always another meeting to plot strategy against "the enemy." Discussion did not thrive in the ensuing climate of political mistrust. Nor did competition for power produce cooperation, except to secure mutual advantage. Or to avoid mutual disaster, such as declining enrollments.

2. Local Tactics: CCC "Careerism"

In Chicago, the scenario unfolded according to plan. Invited speakers at the earlier CCC planning conferences heralded the new careerist theme. An official from the State Board chided faculty for reluctance to accept it. Accreditation visitors urged preparation of a suitable local master plan to carry it out.

Hence, in 1974, without faculty or student input or public hearings, the CCC Master Plan adopted career education as the official philosophy of the City Colleges for the rest of the 70s. The Plan merely formalized administrative policies and actions downgrading the transfer programs and minimizing general education in career programs, which were already in motion. Local administrators, ears to the ground, had picked up national rumblings of the "careerist" movement. The local plan was just an instance of a bigger one, a variation on the "careerist" theme.

What did the Plan propose? General education courses were to be given only in variety and numbers sufficient to service "career"

programs, geared to manpower needs. Hence faculty organization along disciplinary lines was outmoded. Departments would be dissolved and faculty reassigned as adjuncts to "career" programs, organized in five divisional clusters. A centralized administrative agency would oversee faculty adoption of mastery learning, individualized instruction, and use of instructional technology (such as the PLATO computer).

Particularly notable was the Plan's suggestion that more intensive counselling efforts directed at undecided students could move them away from the general studies diploma program (organized around the general education core, permitting easy entry into a college transfer program) and into terminal "career" programs.

The Central Administration's 1978 brochure for a New Loop College, reorganized along vocational lines to serve client agencies in the downtown business community, was a further attempt to carry out prevailing "careerist" ideology. Ironically, the merger was to be carried out by swallowing up Loop in the same City-Wide College, organized in divisional clusters of vocational programs, which it had engendered earlier as an experiment to upgrade workers in "client agencies." No liberal arts division was included in the plan, until faculty and students, outraged by the evident disregard of the need for a transfer program, combined forces to force its inclusion. Temporarily on the back burner, the New Loop College plan is still in prospect.

Meanwhile, a top CCC administrator in 1979 has co-authored a book which advocates reorganizing all of American higher education along "careerist" lines, on the CCC model, to meet employer needs for

the middle manpower needed to service "a finely tuned technological society" in its likeliest future.

B. Shifting Enrollment Patterns

The shrinking pool of college-bound graduates in the 1970s has led many colleges to adopt a "marketing approach" to maintain enrollments. Rather than compete aggressively with four-year colleges and universities for traditional 18-year-old entrants, the CCC has sought its share of the "non-traditional" market: Blacks, Latinos, Asians and other foreign students, senior citizens, and the handicapped.

Because many of these "new students" have had inadequate preparation for traditional academic work, failure to earn course credit and to enroll again has become a problem. The Central Administration's solution has been to expand short-term vocational offerings with minimal general education content, playing to these students' weaknesses. (State reluctance to fund remedial courses adequately is another incentive for this move.) Client agencies, seeking to upgrade their present employees, through occupational programs tailored to their job specifications, have encouraged the trend. However, this approach to "careerism" has the obvious flaw of unjustly ignoring the educational needs of those who have neither a "career," nor general education.

The lessening rate of return on investment in a traditional baccalaureate degree is sometimes cited as a reason for offering fewer general education transfer programs. Since two-thirds or more of CCC students qualify for significant scholarship aid, the issue

of investment is largely moot here. However, the issue of declining job placement for students in traditional baccalaureate fields still needs to be considered.

Studies which purport to show a less idealistic, more pragmatic career-oriented attitude among today's young people are sometimes cited as evidence that the CCC should be offering more "career" programs, or perhaps less theoretical academic programs geared down to everyday consumer problems. Since the perennial idealism of youth has been noted for centuries and verified by studies of adolescent development, it would be truly remarkable if this idealism had suddenly vanished, between one generation and the next. A more reasonable explanation is that, in a tightening job market in a stagnating economy, competition for scarce jobs has temporarily become uppermost in students' minds. The narcissistic hedonism of the "me-generation" worker, underemployed in a narrow, dead-end "career" slot, may well be a sign of despair at the inability of previous generations and of his own to alleviate socioeconomic injustices evident in society. But despair implies the denial of hope, which springs eternal if nurtured in the young. Unfortunately, narrow vocational specialization does little to nurture hope for anything beyond a successful "career" of meeting employer goals. Yet hope is the necessary engine of social improvement, and by failure to nurture it, we deny our own future. In short, the idealism of youth is today thwarted by the harsh realities of the job market, and by the market philosophy current in American education, in a time of combined inflation/recession. But it could be rekindled by giving

young people a sufficiently general grasp of social dynamics, so that the possibilities of alleviating that harshness, both liberal and conservative, become evident alternatives for reasoned choice.

III. The Right Direction

If we ask the wrong question, we will not find the right direction. The question is not "What will students buy in the 1980s?" Asking that is the marketing approach, in which colleges try to sell to the consumer short-term vocational programs, using the lure of (supposedly) quick employment or promotion upon completion. In a faltering economy, that promise may prove to be illusory. Moreover, the approach assumes no change in the student as a whole person, only as a specialized-manpower anxious to be honed to narrow employer specifications. For the colleges to accept the marketing approach as a basis for planning the curriculum would be an abdication of our role as upholders of the ideal of the educated person, who actively works by democratic means to make society and its workplace better.

The right question is "What kind of education will best prepare our students for the whole of life in the 1980s?" Answering it will lead us in the right direction. Our vision of what life will be like in the 1980s will shape our view of the education which will help students to deal with it, as persons and parents, as citizens, and as workers.

Education for life in today's shrinking world must begin by preparing each student to deal with a range of interwoven global problems which will have an increasingly vital and unavoidable impact

upon the lives of everyone. These include: exhaustion of natural resources and energy sources; pollution, erosion, and extinction of species; fierce competition between haves and have-nots over increasingly limited resources, at home and abroad; urban decay, poverty, frustration, and violence; spiritual and moral decay of traditional belief systems, with loss of consensus; worldwide political instability and the threat of localized crises escalating into nuclear holocaust.

At bottom, all these problems are economic and international, with spiritual, political, and social consequences. They are rooted in the unforeseen and unregulated consequences of the rapid but unequal industrialization of the globe over the last 300 years. The emerging global society's occupational structure has been shaped by industrialization's supporting network of scientific, technological, and commercial institutions. Our workaday world, in the occupational structure shaped by global industrialization, is thus bound up with the causes and effects of the very problems which we and our students face as persons and parents, as citizens, and as workers.

Specialized programs of vocational education, which merely prepare students to fit into narrow positions in the job structure's "world of work," cannot prepare them adequately to deal with the numerous interrelated problems generated by thejob structure's underlying global industrial order. Students need to understand how their own lives and work both influence and are influenced by the larger problematic tendencies of the system as a whole. They

need the intellectual tools to get a clear understanding of their general position within industrial civilization as a whole, not merely of the occupational workings of some part of it. Without this general knowledge, they will lack the foresight, imagination, and judgment to choose freely and wisely among the various alternative futures available to our civilization in a time of multiple but interconnected crises.

And choose they must, for the worldwide problems we face are serious, unavoidable, and hence of vital impact upon the lives of all. So all must be prepared to face them. If our nation is to remain a democracy in more than name only, there must be the widest possible discussion and debate of the issues involved in solving these problems. Will the people decide? Or will the managerial elite of an anthill technocracy decide for us? Clearly, all our college youth ought to be offered a good general education of the kind which has traditionally prepared young people to participate fully in the public debate and democratic political processes requisite to solving our increasingly global problems in an orderly, Constitutional way. The primacy of general education for citizenship over education for narrowly specialized work is especially evident in an economy in which lack of work is itself becoming a major international problem.

General education has traditionally provided the widened perspective, the grasp of methods and principles in a variety of fields, needed for understanding problems of the kind and magnitude described above. An improved or reformed general education, more carefully

integrated and perhaps interdisciplinary, can do the same today for students facing the 1980s. Resolving to help our students to understand the theoretical underpinnings and wider social bearings of their specialized education for work might lead us to sharpen our conception of what general knowledge and skills are truly relevant to preparing youth for life, citizenship, and work in the 1980s. It could lead us toward a better quality of education in the CCC for the 1980s.

IV. Redirecting Effort

Improving or reforming general education, integrating specialized vocational education more carefully within its framework, will require sustained cooperation between faculty and administration, listening carefully to the full range of concerns in the communities of the students whom the City Colleges serve in Chicago. One block to such cooperation is the lack of continuing, formal, regular discussion of the problems faculty and administrators jointly face. There are no easy, one-shot solutions to our problems. A few resolutions passed at a conference or two won't do the job. What is needed is a variety of new, ongoing, formal opportunities for faculty and administrators to come together for serious discussion. The widest possible participation will help to achieve the widest consensus on what should be done. For this purpose, every City College teacher and administrator should take part in one of a variety of new committees designed to deal with the various problem areas in which joint cooperation is urgently needed: master-planning, curriculum, instruction, community relations, articulation, and the like. If the present two-day Conference can move us together toward this end, it will have been a success.